
VERMON
A
SERMON

PREACH'D in the
PARISH CHURCH
OF

St. Giles's Cripplegate, &c.

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THE FIRST
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PARISH CHURCH

O F

St. Giles's Cripplegate,

October the 24th 1714.

B Y

WILLIAM WHITFELD, Vicar,
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *W. Redmayne* for *Robert Knaplock* at the
Bishop's-Head in *St. Paul's Church-yard*. 1714.

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TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF THE

PARISH

St. Giles's Cripplegate.

OUR desire of having
this Sermon Printed, which
is the first I Preach'd to you,
shows, I hope, Your sincere Intentions
to

Dedication.

to read it carefully, and to consider it better, than You could in Your transient hearing it; and that others also, who were absent, may now have the opportunity of perusing it. O T

It is of the greatest Consequence to me, and I think to Yourselves, that You should do this; for in that Duty of Your praying for me, which I have with the utmost earnestness requested, this Sermon will be Your Remembrancer, as often as ye shall see it in Your Houses: It will be a Witness against me, if I shall ever deviate from the true Principles of Religion, that are Establish'd in our Holy Church, or from my purpose of Living Sobriety, Righteously, and Godly amongst You; or fail in the Discharge of my
Pastoral

Dedication.

Pastoral Duty, (according to the Intentions I have declar'd,) to the best of my Power and Strength; in which I will very gladly Spend and be Spent for You. And who knows, but that in those good Works, which I have herein recommended, the reading this Discourse may be an incitement to many well-disposed Christians amongst You, to joyn with me in bringing them to Perfection?

If Your perusing this Sermon at Your leisure, with the same Inclinations I Preach'd it, may answer any of these ends, I shall receive my Satisfaction and Reward in Printing it. I pray God grant it may produce all the good Effects which are recommended

Dedication.

ded in it, and most heartily desir'd
by Your

Faithful Servant, and

Minister in Jesus Christ,

William Whitfeld.

Hebrews XIII. 18.

Pray for us: for we trust we have a good Conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

IF the Apostle to the *Hebrews* thought, he had need, of their Prayers, give me leave, my beloved Brethren in Christ, in this first Entrance upon my Ministry among you, to desire the same thing of all them, who wish well to my Labours in the Lord; and to lay the Foundation of all my Hopes, of being a true and faithful Minister of Jesus Christ, in this Parish, in the strength and prevalence of your Prayers to Almighty God, in conjunction with my own, for obtaining this great end.

To which purpose I will endeavour to shew you, from the words of my Text these Three Things.

I. The reason of this Duty in general, and more particularly of praying for the Preachers of the Gospel that are set over you.

II. In what particular things I shall desire your Prayers for me.

III. How far, and upon what account, I shall desire them; even as far, as I trust, that I have a good Conscience, and in all things, am willing, to live honestly.

B

I. As

I. As to the first, the reason of this Duty in general, I pray consider,

I. That this is grounded, upon the general Exhortation of the Apostle, *1 Tim. 2. 1. I exhort therefore, that first of all, (in the first and chiefest place) Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving thanks, be made by you, for all Men.* Supplications for the obtaining what they do want; Prayers for the averting any Evils they shall fear; Intercessions in times of danger; and Thanksgivings for Benefits they have receiv'd.

And this is to be done, with regard to all Men, *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;* for *we are* all God's People; for we all have one God, who created us all; amongst which they that are come to the Knowledge of the Truth in Jesus Christ, are that Church which he hath purchas'd with his own Blood, whereof we are Members in that Mystical Body, whereof he himself is the Head; and, as Members of the same Body, *we are to* mourn, with them that do mourn, and to pray for all that are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity, afflicted in mind, body, or estate. And we are likewise to rejoyce with them that do rejoyce; and so to joyn with the whole Church of God, in our Praises, for our Creation, Preservation, and Redemption by Jesus Christ.

And to the end that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godliness and Honesty, we are exhorted in the first place, to pray for Kings, and all that are in Authority.

For the higher the Stations are, in which Men are placed in this World, by so much the more, and heavier are the Duties, which God requires of them; and therefore, the greater need have they, of the Prayers of all the Faithful, that God may give them Grace and Strength to perform their parts, upon which the Peace and welfare of God's People, both Temporal and Eternal, doth so very much depend.

The Constitution of our Church is very admirable, with respect to this Scheme of praying, which is here laid down by the Apostle. But I shall now confine my self, to that part of this Duty, which the Apostle requires in my Text; namely, to pray for the Ministers of the Gospel. For, as I have already said, the greater and more difficult the Duties are which God lays upon any of his Servants in a publick Station, the more need is there of your fervent and constant Prayer, that they may receive proportionable aids of Grace and Strength, for their right performance of them; upon which, your own Good and Welfare, so very much depending, it will be your Interest, as well as it is your Duty, to pray the more seriously. And there is no Profession whatsoever, attended, I think, with greater difficulties, or requires more firmness of mind, vigilance and attention, and spiritual Courage, than the Preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In consideration of which, and from the inward sense that I have of my own Insufficiency, I do the more earnestly request your Prayers, for my good Success in my Ministry amongst you.

1. Because this will be giving an Earnest to Almighty God, that you do really desire, that your Minister should perform that Good amongst you, which his Holy Function doth require, for shewing forth the glory of God, and setting forward the Salvation of Men. And furthermore, that you will be conscientiously and religiously assisting to him, in all things that are in your power, for the carrying on this great Work. For what Christian can allow himself to pray for that, which he doth not in good earnest desire? And what good Man will say, that he heartily desires, what he doth not by all means endeavour to obtain?

2. There is therefore a very great strength and prevalency with God, in the united Prayers of the Faithful; and the Apostle lays a mighty stress upon them, 2 Cor. 1. 11. That when in his troubles in *Asia*, "He was press'd out of measure, and above his Strength; insomuch that he despair'd even of Life, and had the Sentence of Death in himself, yet God had deliver'd him from so great a Death; you also, (says he) helping together, with your Prayers for us; that for this Gift bestowed upon us, by the means, and for the sake, of the Intercession of many Persons; thanks also may be given, and return'd to God, by many Persons, on our behalf. *i. e.* that as God was the more acknowledg'd by the Prayers of many, he shou'd also be the more glorified in the Thanksgivings of those many.

To this purpose, he admonishes the *Ephes. 6. 18.* *To pray always, with all Prayers and Supplications in the Spirit, and for me* (says he in particular) *that*

that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel. So also Col. 4. 2. Continue in Prayer, withal praying also for us, that God wou'd open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the Mystery of Christ, for which I am also in Bonds, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Let this suffice, to shew you, the reasonableness of this Duty ; and as you are Christians, the ground I have, to expect your conscientious performance of it. As ye are true Members of our Establish'd Church, ye cannot help doing this, whenever ye meet in the House of Prayer, *That the Lord wou'd be with my Spirit*, in the Intercession I am going to make, in the short Suffrages, for all Estates of Men ; *that he wou'd endue his Ministers with Righteousness : That he wou'd give to all Bishops and Curates the healthful Spirit of his Grace, and pour upon them the continual dew of his blessing ; that he wou'd illuminate them with the true knowledge and understanding of his word ; and that both by their Preaching and Living, they may set it forth and shew it accordingly ; and that he would give them his Grace, that both by their Life and Doctrine, they may set forth his true and lively word, and rightly and duly administer his Holy Sacraments. That so they may set forth the glory of God, and set forward the Salvation of all Men, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

These Reasons, I say, I have to require this Duty of you in my entring upon my Ministry amongst you ; and I have, (as I shall shew you presently,) very great reason, God knows, to be

exceeding earnest, in making this my first Request unto you.

But, as to them, whose Mouthes are more accustomed to Oathes and Curses, than to holy Prayers, I cannot hope or expect this from them : If it shall please God to forgive them their Blasphemy and Profaness, and their not praying for themselves ; I shall easily pass by their not praying for me ; but not so, as not to pray for them, most earnestly. As for them, who distinguish themselves by throwing contempt upon our Holy Order, which are chiefly, I hope amongst the lowest, and most Ignorant, (tho' there are not wanting some in higher Stations, who ought to know better,) I will endeavour to instruct the Ignorant, if they are willing to be taught ; and to bear with Patience, (but not without Pity, for their meanness and malice of Spirit,) the greatest Contempt, which any in the highest Sphere, shall pour out upon me, the least deserving, or upon any other Clergy-man of the lowest Degree, for his Function-sake.

But I speak only to serious Christians, and to them chiefly, who are of our own Communion. With these, my Words (if they are grounded upon the word of God, and the Doctrine of our Church) will have their just Weight. And if there be others, (as I suppose there may be many) who do belong to other Congregations, let me beseech them, in the Love of God, so far to partake of my Pastoral Care over them, as to pray for God's Blessing upon all my Endeavors, which shall tend to the promoting the common Salvation of Mankind

kind through Jesus Christ, in such Doctrines as all who call themselves Christians cannot but acknowledge to be necessary to Salvation. And if they do not, with the Papists think themselves Infallible; but, (as all Protestants do,) humbly believe themselves capable of falling into Error; let them earnestly pray to Almighty God, that in those things, wherein I do, and must differ from them in judgment, (if I was true and sincere in the publick Profession which I made before God, and unto you, the last Lord's Day,) that he would open their Eyes, first to believe that they may be mistaken, and then to see their Errors; that so with hearty Repentance for their Schism and Separation, they may come under my Ministry, which they cannot but acknowledge to be Right and Lawful, according to the Laws of the Land; and according to the Laws of God also, if my Mission be true, and my Doctrines sound.

II. To shew you those things in particular, for which I chiefly crave the assistance of your Prayers to Almighty God, on my behalf.

I. That you would pray for his Grace and Holy Spirit, to go before me always; and direct me to all those Duties of my Holy Profession, which may be most for his Glory, and the good of your own Souls: That he would give me his Strength, (and subdue in me all thoughts of my own sufficiency,) to work with me, in performing the same: And lastly, his Grace of persevering, that I may continue in doing these things, in Righteousness and Holiness, to my Lives end.

And, because through the frailty of Man, no

one can stand but in the help of God; and because I too well know my own great Infirmities, let me most earnestly request, (and conjure you) fervently to pray to God, and seriously to resolve with yourselves, that no Infirmities of mine, or Defects in my Administration, or any of those Sins to which all Men are obnoxious, (and no one free from, but by the Grace of God) may ever bring Disreputation, to those eternal Truths, which I shall Preach among you; or weaken your Faith in the Prayers, which I shall offer up unto God for you; or create any disesteem, (for my sake,) of the Holy Sacraments which I shall Administer unto you.

If ye believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or the Doctrine of the Articles of this Church, which I read last Sunday, 'tis not the Righteousness of Man, or Holiness of Angels, that can add efficacy to the Sacraments of Christ; nor is it the Wickedness of Man, or in the Power of Satan, to diminish ought of their Grace, when duly administred.

2. It being requir'd in the Chapter of my Text,
 " that you should remember them, that have the
 " Rule over you, and follow their Faith; and
 " that you should obey them, and submit yourselves,
 " because they watch for your Souls, as they
 " that must give Account; I earnestly desire your
 " Prayers, that I may keep back no Truth, that
 " may be profitable for you; nor neglect to de-
 " clare unto you, all the Counsel of God; that
 " so I may be pure from the Blood of all Men.
 Even such Truths, as may, perhaps, be very ill

relish'd

relish'd, by some of yourselves, and may be of hazardous Consequence to my own Peace, to declare with Freedom, and Christian Sincerity; that even in these things, "ye would suffer the Word of Exhortation, and bear with the Reproofs of the Preacher, as, he is an Ambassador from God, and the Steward of his Holy Mysteries.

It is a fundamental Principle of the Protestant Religion, that no Doctrine is necessary to Salvation, but what may be prov'd from the Word of God. If therefore I shall Preach any other, every one of my Hearers hath the Right to demand from me, upon what Authority of Scripture I do ground that Doctrine; and to reject and renounce it, if I cannot prove it from thence. This being your Liberty and Privilege, in all things which I shall declare, as necessary to be done or believ'd, or shall reprove for, when neglected; you must needs own the Obligation you are under, to comply with all those Duties and Doctrines, which you cannot disapprove the Truth of from the Holy Scripture. And therefore ye ought at least, to bear them with Patience, how irksome soever they may be to your accusing Consciences, in the hearing them.

In all these things, ye are not only to pray, but also to subdue, and mortify any evil or corrupt Affection, that may rise in your Breasts, and beget Animosities in your Hearts against the Preacher. That so, *laying aside all maliciousness, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and envy, and all evil speaking; as new-born babes, ye may desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* 1 Pet. 2. 2. And that I may not become your enemy, because I tell you the truth, Gal.

Peace and Charity, are indeed the peculiar Blessings of the Gospel, and the sure and genuine Fruits of God's Holy Spirit, but no where so necessary, as between the Pastor and his People. Unhappy both! wherever they cannot be had! The Pastor shall be uncomfortable, in Reflecting upon the loss of all his Labors; and so the People also, whenever God shall give them Grace, to see the great Mischiefs which their own unreasonable Prejudices, have brought upon themselves, and many, many others. Upon which account, I may justly pronounce in the Words of our Saviour. *Blessed are the peace-makers.* Let all those, who shall be the Disturbers of the Peace of our *Sion*, consider, what the Reverse of this Blessing is.

3. I am not only, to desire your Prayers for the Soundness of my Mind and Judgment, that I may Preach unto you sound, and wholesome Doctrine; but also (in a more especial manner) for my bodily Health; that as St. Paul says to *Philemon* 22. *I may trust, through your Prayers; to be given unto you.* I am, but too subject to those bodily Distempers, which without the Mercy of God, and the assistance of your Prayers, may often give too long an Interruption to the Work of my Ministry. I come unto you, (tho' in Health, I bless God, and not over-much diminish'd in my natural Strength, yet) laden with those Years and former Labors, which generally do bring a Decay with them.

Ye have been sufferers already upon this Account, in the long weakness, which occasion'd the necessary absence of my Predecessor, (the late Right Reverend Bishop, now with God,) from
this

this Cure. Whatsoever, in the Holiness of his unblemish'd Life, and in the Purity of his Doctrine, hath been profitable unto you, and ye have Treasur'd up in honest and good Hearts, I beseech you to remember, and now " he is Dead, " let him speak unto you. Pray for me, that in all these things, I may be " a follower of him, " as he was of Christ; but if it may be, (as it may be, by God's Blessing,) without any of those severe Maladies, which (to his and your Misfortune) kept him so long from you, but at last, carry'd him to everlasting Bliss.

Lastly, When I set before my Eyes, the vast extent of this Parish, of near Four Thousand Houses, (and yet of many more Families in them;) the numberless multitudes of Poor, starving for want of Bread, and all Necessaries; so many hungry Mouths, and naked Bodies, not to be Fed or Cloath'd, one would think, without a Miracle; or without (that which is next to a Miracle) bringing them to Work and do something themselves for their own Sustainance: When I consider the many young Children in this populous Parish, that are to be Instructed in the true Principles of the Christian Religion; for which, (let me speak it to your Praise,) some very commendable Care is already taken; and more, I trust, shall be had to them: When I view in my thoughts, the abundance of Sick always among you; and hear the many daily Passing-Bells, for the departed; and at the same time, seriously reflect upon the Care and Charge, committed unto me, in all these respects; how can I help crying out with

St. Paul, *Who O Lord is sufficient for these things?* But as he says in the next Chapter, *Our sufficiency is of God.* The Consideration of these things, my Beloved in the Lord, will not only bespeak your earnest Prayers for me, but also, your heartiest endeavors, and your most vigorous Applications to assist and encourage me, in this great Task.

1. Therefore I recommend my self to your Prayers in the Words of Solomon 1 Kings 3. 9. *That God would give me an understanding heart, (not to judge, but) to minister, to this People; for who is able to minister to this, thy so great a People?* For your comfort and mine, the very next Words are, *That the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.* Let us therefore Pray, *that God would strengthen me with the Holy Ghost the Comforter; and daily encrease in me, his manifold Gifts of Grace; the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Ghostly Strength; the Spirit of Knowledge and true Godliness, and fill me with the Spirit of his Holy Fear, now, and for ever.*

2. In the next place, let me crave the Assistance of your endeavors, and heartiest applications to be joyn'd with mine in this Work. When *Jethro (Moses's Father in Law,)* saw the great Multitude of the People, to which his Son administered Justice every day, and that they stood by *Moses* from the Morning unto the Evening; he wisely thus advised him. "Thou wilt surely wear thy self away: for this thing is too heavy for thee: thou art not able to perform it thy self alone. Harken therefore unto my Voice; I will give thee Coun-

"fel,

“ fel, and God shall be with thee. Thou shalt
 “ provide out of all the People, able Men, such
 “ as fear God, Men of Truth, hating Covetous-
 “ ness: And place such over them. &c. So shall
 “ it be easier for thee, and they shall bear the
 “ Burden with thee. Every great matter, they
 “ shall bring unto thee; but every small matter,
 “ they shall bring unto them, *Exod. 18. 22.*

I say not this, to excuse my self, in any of
 the lowest, or smallest matters, which do belong
 to my Profession, but that I may, (as far as I
 can with a good Conscience,) lighten the great
 and heavy Burden, by dividing it into more
 hands, than I now find it in; and by making
 such a further Provision of Curates and Assi-
 stants (in due time,) as may extend to the Spi-
 ritual Wants of my Parishioners, in a better
 manner, than can be now had; altho' they are
 now administred to, by a very faithful and in-
 dustrious Servant of Jesus Christ.

And these I trust, shall in due season be ap-
 pointed; such as are able Men that fear God,
 Men of Truth, and hating Covetousness. And if it
 shall please God, that I may live to see that great
 good Work accomplish'd, (which to the best of my
 Power, and Interest, I will, solícite and forward)
 of Three more new Churches, being raised in this
 Parish, with their proper Ministers settled in them,
 I shall then bless God for his Mercies, that
 he hath given to so many more Inhabitants, op-
 portunity to Worship the Lord in this Apostolick
 Church, in Truth and Purity; that he hath sent
 so many more Laborers, into this large Vineyard;
 and thereby taken away that Excuse and Reproach,
 that

that so many are forc'd into separate Meetings, (and thereby seduced into Error,) by their wanting Room, and Convenience, in their own Parish Church. This good Design was laid, and settled (as ye know in the time of our late Blessed Queen, and we have the Promise of our Gracious King, Her Successor, (in His Answer to the Address of the Bishop and Clergy of this City,) that he will carry it on.

This, by the Blessing of God, shall be my Part. And as to yours, my Beloved Brethren, ye have already given me, very promising hopes, to expect well from you; for I know that there are able Men among you, that fear God; Men of Truth, and hating Covetousness. I bespeak and beseech all such, to come in to my Assistance, in all these things. Ye Men of try'd Probity, Experience, and Wisdom! Be ye my Counsellors and Directors! Ye that fear God, let me prevail with you, to do what you can, for his Honour and Glory! Ye Men, of Riches and Wealth, Honour the Lord with your Substance, as ever ye expect that your Estates should descend with the Blessing of God upon your Posterity.

How many various Objects are there in this Parish, which do loudly call for this from you? The many poor Children, for their Nurture in the fear of the Lord! the numberless Poor, destitute of all necessities of Life! Many of them helpless, disabled thro' Sicknes, Age, or Infirmities, which cry for your Alms and Charity! And more, as I hear, that want Work and Discipline towards Bodily Labor, which they are able to perform.

And after, or even before the Living, let me not

not forget the Dead, the most miserable Spectacle of all, I think, and the most deserving your Compassion ! Their Corpses, (as well as ours in a short time shall) do all await for the Resurrection of the last day. But in the mean time, what tender Parent would not be agast to see his Child ? What loving Husband, would bear to see the Body of his Wife, mangled and broken, in the place, wherein they were convey'd to their everlasting Rest ? in which (besides the injuries done to Bodies, that shall rise in Glory) They have as just and legal a Right to lye undisturb'd to the last day, as the Living have to be free from Violence and Molestation in their own Habitations or Lands, whether they purchas'd, or receiv'd them by Gift. The former Title have the Richer Sort to their Burial Places, which they have paid for ; and the other Claim have the Poor for theirs for ever. *

If Christianity cannot prevail with us, for their better treatment after Death ; yet let common Humanity, and known Justice, plead the Cause of the Dead ! And if even this also be too far deprav'd in us, let the concern for our own safety move us ; that in the apparent danger we are at this time threatned with, by a Pestilence from Brute-beasts, the Infection may not be taken from humane Bodies, in the noisom Stenches they shall send forth, from their disturbed, and every day broken up Graves.

I do with the more assurance, my Brethren, make these my Requests unto you, at my first appearance in this Place, in the humble confidence that,

** By the Laws of the Land, whosoever shall steal but a Winding-sheet from a Dead Corps, is guilty of Felony, and is punishable by the Executors or heirs who buried the Corps. He that shall break a Graves-stone, or Coat of Arms, is liable to an Action at Law from the Executors.*

Lastly,

(as the Apostle saith of himself) *I must I have a conscience, and am willing in all things, to live honestly:* that I do not now, nor shall ever hereafter, ask your aid or Assistance in any thing, wherein a good Conscience shall not be my warrant, and my desire to live honestly in all things, and to do good, the Reason and Foundation of my Request.

What my Conscience is, as to the Doctrinal part of my Profession, I shew'd you the last Lord's Day, when I read the 39 Articles of Religion in the Desk, the best Sermon, by far, that I shall ever Preach among you; which thro' God's Grace, I purpose firmly to adhere unto; for they are all according to my Judgment, and I should sin against Knowledge, and my own Conscience, if I did not.

What my Hopes are, of Living Honestly amongst you in all things, must be referr'd (as to them, to whom I am yet unknown in what I have formerly done,) to the Justice and Piety of my Conversation amongst you hereafter; to the sobriety of my Life, and candor and equity of my Dealings; to my Charity among you, and the conscientious Discharge of my Duty, which I must answer for at the last Day. In all which, how steadfastly I may resolve, yet must I depend upon God's Grace, and the prevalency of your Prayers joined with my own, for the performance.

But in the former of these, having already declar'd up to you my Opinion, in the Articles of our Church; and as for the latter, being I am to depend upon the Grace of God, in what is to be done hereafter, and to be try'd by my future Actions; nothing remains further to be said on this Subject, but to conclude in the Words of this Apostle after my Text.

Remembering the S. d of Peace, make you perfect in every good Work: To do his Will: Working in you, that which is well-pleasing in our Father's sight thro' Jesus Christ, for whose sake, I bring you this Word of Exhortation.

F I N I S.

